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ABSTRACT

Though current agricultural economic and social conditions are impacting on the scale of educational delivery systems, the way education is financed in rural areas, the range of educational services available, and the willingness and ability of local districts to provide levels of educational services justified by overall societal benefit and cost, rural education in America is entering an era of opportunity in terms of meeting the educational needs of children and adults. General Education Diplomas and Adult Basic Education programs, vocational/occupational training, counseling and information programs, economic development programs, adult education programs, programs for special rural populations, campus-based programs focusing on rural needs, industry-based training, telephone/television/satellite instruction, radio and newspaper instruction, independent and individualized study, and integrated systems approaches may be means for making lifelong learning a reality for rural people. Strategies for rural program development must gain access to people in their communities; develop local involvement; determine needs and relate them to program/institutional mission; foster interinstitutional/organizational collaboration; facilitate communication among learners, staff, and institutions; and use creative planning and strategies. Local rural education units, states, and the federal government all have a role to play in supporting the improvement of rural education. (NEC)

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RURAL EDUCATION: PAST AND FUTURE

To say that rural America has experienced major changes in its social and economic conditions during the past 50 years is to state the obvious. At the beginning of the depression years there were 6.7 million farm families; today there are only 2 million. Running water, electricity, agricultural mechanization, and other modern amenities were rarities. Educational attainment of rural citizens was only a fraction of those living in urban areas.

In 1967, a Presidential Commission issued the People Left Behind, a report on the rural condition. The authors of that report found conditions relatively unchanged since the 1930's. Between 1950-1965, technological innovation had reduced employment by 45 percent. Rural unemployment was 18 percent at a time when the national average was only 4 percent. More than 14 million rural citizens were living in poverty. Forty percent of substandard housing was located in rural areas.

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Address by Dr. Duane M. Nielsen, Chair of the United States Department of Education Rural Education Committee and Deputy Director of the Division of Innovation and Development, at the Annual Conference of the National Rural and Small Schools Consortium, October 9, 1986, Bellingham, Washington.

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But in the decade which followed, remarkable changes began to take place. It was during this time that the reverse migration, population turnaround began. Beginning in the 1960's, and with dramatic acceleration in the 1970's the pattern of rural decline reversed itself. While some rural regions continued to lose population, the 1970's saw the population of rural and small town America as a whole grow more than 50 percent faster than that of urban America.

People in virtually every ethnic, racial, age, and economic category moved to rural America in the 1970's. The urban commuting patterns began to reach beyond the suburbs to the countryside during the past decade, but the population growth in rural America was not simply a product of urban sprawl. Instead it was an expression of preferences for a more rural lifestyle.

At least since the 1940's, when national public opinion surveys were first taken, a majority of Americans has expressed a preference for rural life even while more and more moved into cities. By the 1970's, beset by crowded conditions and other urban ills, and drawn by expanding rural job opportunities and other attractions of the countryside, millions of city dwellers were ready to move, and did.

Today nonmetropolitan America claims a population of over 60 million people, one in every four Americans.

Rural employment growth in the 1970's outpaced urban job progress by one-third. While total employment in the United States rose at an annual rate of 2.1 percent in the 1970's, the growth rate in rural America was 2.3 percent, compared with a 1.9 percent rate in metropolitan areas. The most rural counties were among the areas of most rapid growth. Those with no town of more than 2,500 people averaged 3.3 percent employment growth.

The efficient American farmer continued to produce greater harvests with fewer people — twice as much output as in the 1940's with one-third as many workers. The farm population seemed to have stabilized at fewer than 6 million out of a total rural population of more than 60 million. Other rural enterprises, however, registered significant gains in employment and output during the 1970's, diversifying the rural economy to the point that agriculture could no longer be said to dominate it. With this diversification, the rural economy was coming closer to resembling the national economy and, thus, more directly affected by national economic cycles.

Also, self-employment — a strong rural tradition — was nearly twice as prevalent in rural as in urban America, and this entrepreneurship extended from the farm to every other field of rural economic activity.

The percentage of rural people living in poverty fell from 17.9 in 1969 to 13.7 in 1980. In the long term, over the past 20 years, the number of people below the official poverty line declined even more dramatically, from about 33 percent of the rural population in 1959 to only 13.7 percent in 1980.

The 1970's saw the measure of rural "sick days" (days absent from work or school) fall below that of urban areas for the first time. During this period there was also a 13 percent increase in the number of rural physicians per 100,000 people. The number of occupied housing units lacking full plumbing — the key indicator of substandard housing — fell during the 1970's from 13 percent to 5.4 percent.

The percentage of high school graduates among the rural population grew from 45.9 in 1970 to 62.8 in 1980, more than the urban percentage. Secretary of Education William J. Bennett's recent report card on education placed several of our most rural states near the top [redacted] in the nation in 1985. The fact that rural America was once again becoming an attractive place to live was recognized by large numbers of urban residents, who put their long recognized preferences into action — they moved to the country and into the small towns.

However, this movement created some problems of its own. The newcomers began to demand services from local governments similar to the services in urban areas. In some rural communities, though certainly not in all, this demand was beyond the technical and fiscal capabilities of the local government systems. The delivery of most government services is almost always more expensive and difficult in rural areas. There are fewer users per mile of sewer pipe, electrical lines, or telephone wires. Thus, problems of scale and distance, coupled with the lower tax base of rural communities, have caused some problems and, during the 1980's, the plight of the rural economy has created some very serious problems.

But, as so wisely put by Thomas Carlyle, "Today is not yesterday. We ourselves change. How, then, can our works and thoughts, if they are always to be the fittest, continue always the same? Change, indeed, is painful, yet ever so needful; and, just as memories of the past have their force and worth, so also do our hopes for the future". So, with that background of the past, what does the future hold for rural education?

Dr. Neil E. Harl, Distinguished Professor of Economics at Iowa State University, in his keynote address to the Department of Education 1985 National Rural Education Forum, dramatically outlined the implications for rural America in the changing rural economy. He observed that only rarely has rural education in the United States faced the challenges inherent in today's rural economic environment. Quite clearly, rural education in this country is entering an era of enormous opportunity in terms of meeting the educational needs of individuals, both youth and adult. At the same time, the capacity of rural areas to provide the educational services needed may be significantly diminished. A major challenge for school administrators, teachers, taxpayers, concerned citizens and governments is how to finance and organize to meet the educational needs for the last decade and a half of this century. How successfully we address this challenge will determine the future for rural education well into the twenty-first century.

Rapid economic and social change in rural America is not a new phenomenon. Since the beginning of recorded history, our rural areas have been adjusting to conditions of greater efficiency. However, the current plight of

the rural economy resulting from a multiplicity of interacting factors, has serious implications for rural education. Many of those being forced out of rural occupations are the younger farm families with school age children. The reduced numbers of children in grades K through 12 will alter the characteristics of educational delivery systems.

Youth wanting to enter agricultural pursuits can anticipate a more demanding economic environment than the 1960's and 1970's, with more formal education needed to master the necessary technical and management skills needed for economic survival. Children in rural areas not wanting to farm will need the vocational buoyancy and mobility that can come from formal education in making a successful entry into the non-farm world of work. Children from families suffering economic displacement because of the current financial crisis in agriculture are likely to see a brighter future outside of agriculture than within it.

Although our educational systems have already been affected by the economic trauma affecting much of agriculture, successive waves of adjustment are almost certain to more seriously impact: (1) the scale of educational delivery systems, (2) the way education is financed in rural areas, (3) the range of educational services available; and (4) the willingness and ability of local districts to provide levels of educational services justified by overall societal benefit and cost.

With much of education in grades K-12 and post-high school vocational-technical education dependent upon local property tax revenues, the first

wave of adjustment is likely to stem from interruptions in the flow of property tax revenues. Dr. Harl reported that two recent surveys in the State of Iowa indicated a sharp rise in delinquency rates on real property taxes due in 1985. A state-wide survey indicated that nearly eight percent of the $1.6 billion in property taxes levied in Iowa during the 1984-85 budget year were unpaid as of May 1, 1985. In some counties the delinquency rate was as high as 25.6 percent. The Iowa State University Farm and Rural Life Poll, taken of a random sample of farm respondents in March and April, 1985, reported that 10 percent of the respondents had been unable to pay property taxes. Although land stands as the security for eventual payment of the property taxes assessed, nonpayment interrupts the flow of revenue for periods ranging from a few weeks to several months. The effects of nonpayment are felt by counties, cities, school districts and other local governmental units which are dependent upon property tax revenues. Typically, school districts are budgeted so tightly that interruptions of the magnitude suggested require budgeting adjustments.

The second wave of adjustment will relate to the capacity of the local community to support educational service and other costs of local government. As farmers reach insolvency and as suppliers and other merchants cease doing business, the employment base of many rural communities will decline with further economic adjustments for school districts. In the 1984 Iowa State University study, 23.3 percent of the Iowa farmers quitting farming for financial reasons moved out of the county. Of that group, 13.2 percent moved out of state. Declines in school census will involve reductions in state level financial assistance

to local school districts unless major adjustments are made in aid distribution formulas. The sharp drop in values of farmland and values of machinery and equipment in rural areas relates to a reduced capacity to support public services, including education, and may lead to a shift of the property tax burden to nonagricultural property within taxing districts.

Those states which are heavily agricultural, should focus their attention quickly on plans for ensuring that educational services adequate for local needs, quantitatively and qualitatively, will be available through the remainder of this century. Reduction in federal support levels for education can be anticipated, at least in the near term, under Gramm-Rudman-Hollings. Pressure is likely to become intense at the state level for reallocations of public resources for all public services affected by the twin forces of reduced federal funding and diminished local revenue generating capacity.

Greater reliance on income and sales tax revenues could be expected in an economy that is becoming more service oriented. That trend is likely to be accelerated in rural areas as states attempt to accommodate the economic forces set in motion by the financial problems.

The willingness of local districts to provide educational services may also be adversely affected by the negative psychology usually accompanying diminished economic vitality. Those remaining in rural agricultural communities, disproportionately the older and the more cautious and

conservative, are perhaps less likely to provide strong leadership for maintaining levels of educational services. Moreover, rational decision makers tend to grow cautious in the face of uncertainty and many rural-area communities are likely to face a great deal of economic uncertainty for the foreseeable future.

So, those of us charged with managing and administering educational programs in rural areas are approaching a task of herculean proportions: reconciling unprecedented demands for educational services on the one hand and carrying out programs in an environment of diminished local capacity to support current levels of educational services on the other. Without doubt, well planned and delivered educational services will pay handsome dividends on a cost-benefit basis. But new strategies will be needed as shifts occur in funding patterns and in leadership in rural areas. The challenge to rural educators at all levels will be awesome. In the words of the Nobel-winning American physicist, Albert Abraham Michelson, who spent over 50 years studying the problems of light and who received the 1907 Nobel prize in physics, "my greatest inspiration is a challenge to attempt the impossible". While we most certainly should not cast the challenge to rural education in the realm of the impossible, there will likely be times in the next decade when we, through our most creative and dedicated efforts, will feel that we have, in fact, <u>accomplished the impossible</u>. It is at those moments that we must remember that challenges and problems are really only opportunities in disguise. We will need to believe, as did the Apostle Paul in his letter to the Phillipians:

"I count not myself to have yet attained, looking not at those things which are behind but looking ahead to those things which are before, this one thing I do. I press on!".

So, let us "press on" in the interest of rural education and rural America but, as we do so, let's keep our futuristic thinking in perspective. No one else is going to tackle these challenges for us. In the sage wisdom of Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Neither what lies behind us, nor what lies ahead of us, is as important as what lies within us."

During my lectures and leadership workshops for rural youth at the Freedom's Foundation in Valley Forge, I am always impressed and refreshed by the inherent goodness and character of our rural young people. But I am also deeply impressed and influenced by the huge American flag which, 24 hours a day, flies over the Freedom's Foundation. I have photographed that flag, flying in all of its magnificant glory against a deep blue sky, and have an enlargement of it hanging in my office in Washington: A former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court caught the true meaning of that flag in a simple, eloquent expression which also gives dimension to our responsibilities to the future in contrast to our reliance on the past:

"That flag means America first; it means an undivided allegiance . . . It means that we cannot be saved by the past, the valor and devotion of our ancestors; it means that to each generation comes its patriotic duty; and that upon our willingness to sacrifice and endure, as those before have sacrificed and endured, rests the national hope. It speaks of equal rights; of the

inspiration of free institutions exemplified and vindicated; of liberty under law intelligently conceived and impartially administered. There is not a thread in it that does not scorn self-indulgence, weakness, and mediocrity. It speaks eloquently of our common destiny!"

To me, that flag and that statement also speak eloquently of the best of, and the destiny of, rural America.

Past experiences should be a guidepost, not a hitching post. They should be the starting line, not the finish line, preparation, not destination. Just as he who was totally self taught had a fool for his teacher, he who totally charts his own course has a fool as his navigator. So, for the next few minutes, lets' turn to some of the thinking of a few of the experts who have been addressing the issues of rural education over the past several months.

Richard Margolis, noted journalist and founding chairman of Rural America, Inc., recently observed that it is hard to escape the conclusion that something significant is occurring in rural America, something that rural people need to understand. The issues, challenges, changes and opportunities are varied and complex. Education programs, both formal and informal, can provide the framework for pursuing that understanding.

Educational programs across the nation are mounting a massive effort to integrate new in-migrants into rural communities, to assist residents to cope with the problems of the changing rural economy, and to enhance the opportunities for individuals to realize their personal aspirations through learning. Elementary and secondary schools, community colleges, vocational-technical institutions, community-based organizations, state and federal agencies, colleges and universities, business and industry, churches, cooperative extension units and others are participating in the effort to make lifelong learning a reality for rural people.

Douglas M. Treadway, in his book "Higher Education in Rural America", published by the College Board in 1984, stated that for the most part, individuals and organizations offering educational programs for rural communities, are isolated from one another and do not benefit from a high level of exchange of working strategies and effective programs. He cited several noncollege-based programs that could actively collaborate in program offerings and resource sharing: GED and ABE Programs (General Education Diploma and Adult Basic Education), vocational/occupational training, counseling and information programs, economic development programs, adult education programs, programs for special rural populations, campus-based programs focusing on rural needs, industry-based training, telephone/television/satellite instruction programs, radio and newspaper instruction, independent and individualized study programs and integrated systems approaches.

Doug also suggested six strategies for program development in rural areas, especially in working with adults: 1) Gain access to people in their communities; 2) Develop local involvement; 3) Determine needs and relate those needs to program/institutional mission; 4) Foster interinstitutional/ organizational collaboration mission; 5) Facilitate communication among learners, staff and institutions and organizations; and 6) Use creative planning and strategies.

A "New Dimensions" rural conference held in Moscow, Idaho, in April of 1983, identified the following characteristics of effective rural outreach programs:

A successful rural outreach program:

* Has an effective means of reaching people and making them aware of opportunities;
* Assists individuals and groups with the sharing and development of their own skills;
* Utilizes local resources and groups and referral agents;
* Utilizes good information (free of jargon) that is honest and reliable with respect to program descriptions;
* Has flexibility - covers a wide range of individual needs and modes of participation;
* Offers programs that are enjoyable, stimulating, and even inspirational;
* Emphasizes programs that have short time frames (intensive);

* Breaks down content of programs into small (bite-size) pieces;
* Offers programs that are practical, technically useful, and oriented to job skills;
* Provides coordination between different education providers and gives good information on differences in institutions and programs;
* Recognizes prior learning as legitimate, both in terms of academic credit and also as an aspect in all education and training;
* Offers intergenerational learning opportunities;
* Gives awareness of the outside world through exposure to other cultures and ideas and to current regional, national, and world issues;
* Provides for coordination of room facilities, community-events calendars, etc., and avoids duplication and competition for scheduling time;
* Offers programs with nonstereotyped and bias-free approaches;
* Has a cost-effective delivery that incorporates all possible sources of funding, local and outside the community;
* Offers some programs strictly for personal improvement rather than for college credit or job training;
* Involves the total family unit in a significant number of educational programs;
* Makes certain that instructors know something about adult education;
* Utilizes technology effectively and efficiently and provides support or learning aids;

* Utilizes approaches to programs that build participant self-esteem and personal confidence as a learner and rural citizen;
* Offers programs that lead to something — credentials or degrees — and are not unrelated fragments of programs or only partial degree requirements that necessitate going to campus for completion; and
* Offers programs that contribute to the quality of life in the community, enriching the participants and bettering their understanding of their role in social change in rural towns.

Dr. Roy H. Forbes, Director of the Rural Education Institute at East Carolina University, presented a paper on Policy Trends and Impacts on Rural School Districts at the National Rural Education Forum which I referenced earlier. He summarized his paper by stating: "Educational reform is an ongoing process, but periodically public interest focuses on educational concerns and the level of reform activity is dramatically increased." The United States is currently experiencing one of these periods.

Rural education may be the big winner. Concerns have focused on improving education for all students regardless of where they live, a direction not emphasized in most previous movements.

The reforms bring challenges to rural educators and policymakers, but they

also bring extraordinary opportunities for real progress. These challenges relate to :

* Increased requirements for teacher certification;
* An increase in number, and changes in type, of courses required for high school graduation;
* Increases in university admission requirements;
* The need for new or renovated facilities and equipment;
* Adequate financing;
* Increased and improved services;
* Improved organizational structures and systems;
* Improving thinking skills;
* Impact of instructional technology; and
* Teacher shortages.

In his paper he recommended that <u>states should:</u>

Develop and fund programs that recognize and reward local initiatives that respond to the challenges presented to rural schools by the reform movement;

Initiate curriculum development efforts designed to integrate the teaching of higher order skills into all levels of instruction;

Use formulas in allocating teachers to rural schools that consider course demands - allocations should not be based solely on total school enrollment;

Provide services that network rural schools;

Allocate materials, supplies and equipment to rural schools based on the numbers of students enrolled in learning opportunities that require special materials, supplies and equipment;

Explore options that would assist economically disadvantaged counties in the construction and renovation of educational facilities;

States should provide loan forgiveness programs for individuals who agree to teach in rural schools and who are willing to obtain multiple certification, and should provide programs that assist rural schools in the recruitment and placement of teachers and administrators in rural areas;

Formulas used to allocate staff development funds should consider the number of teachers servicing isolated geographical regions;

States should provide for programs that assist local districts in the planning and operation of instructional programs that make optimal use of instructional technology.

Dr. Forbes' suggestions for <u>local rural education units included</u>:

More extensive and effective community involvement;

The developing of partnerships with civic organizations, churches, other educational agencies and local businesses;

The creation of regional networks and foundations to provide support for additional educational programs;

Increased use of innovative instructional strategies. Networking can lead to sharing of programs and materials that have been successful in other rural areas;

Greater emphasis on the use of instructional technology; and

Local systems can work within their own organizational structure and in the community to enhance recruitment and retention of high quality personnel in rural areas.

Dr. Forbes' also identified what he considered as appropriate roles for the federal government to play in supporting the improvement of rural education:

He pointed out that the states have the constitutional responsibility for education and local units have the responsibility to provide direct educational services for individuals.

The federal government should collect, process and disseminate adequate statistics needed to accurately describe demographics and educational programs associated with rural areas.

The federal government should identify networks that can be used by rural education systems in maintaining contact with other systems that share common problems and concerns.

The federal government should develop a rural education handbook or guide and periodically update it.

The federal government should identify needed research and development for rural areas and provide support for such research, development and field testing.

I am pleased to report that our Department of Education Rural Education Committee, which I chair, has addressed and is continuing to address each of these issues. This committee, which was mandated by the Department of Education Organization Act, has 14 members, one from each of the 14 major offices in the Department. The primary function of the committee is the coordination of rural education activities within the Department of Education. The committee develops an annual program of work and management plan and works through subcommittees addressing each of its major objectives. An extensive report is prepared at the close of each year. The committee has reviewed legislation and regulations for inequities relevant to rural education; has assisted in the improvement of the rural data base and in forms simplification; has implemented a rural network with over 300 institutions, agencies and individuals on the network; has inventoried and coordinated rural education activities throughout the Department of Education and across other Federal agencies; has developed a

rural education research and development agenda for consideration by Department of Education managers based on input from the National Rural Development Institute here at Western Washington University, the Rural Education Association, ERIC/CRESS, and other rural education organizations and agencies; and is developing a rural education resources guide in cooperation with NRDI. The committee has planned and conducted two Department of Education sponsored national rural education conferences, one in 1984 in Washington, D. C., with over 700 in attendance, and the August, 1985, conference in Kansas City which produced nine major rural education issue papers. These nine documents are available through ERIC/CRESS, the ERIC Clearinghouse for Rural Education and Small Schools at Las Cruces, New Mexico. One of our more significant accomplishments has been the development and implementation of a national rural education policy statement for the Department of Education. In developing that policy statement the committee recognized that:

1. It should be the position of the Department of Education to promote equity for rural education.

2. The policy should promote new partnerships in rural education involving state and local agencies and the private sector. It should also address issues in rural education, long identified by rural educators and other supporters of rural education.

3. A formal statement should be prepared and submitted for approval through established procedures, in which every principal office

within the Department is afforded input into the policy's final development. The statement should be officially issued as a Department of Education policy declaration after approval and signing by the Secretary of Education.

4. A plan of implementation should be included in the justification package that is routinely prepared to accompany any proposal submitted for the Secretary's approval, so that the policy statement could become a living action document and not a mere announcement.

Consequently, our committee developed, and the Secretary on August 23, 1983, signed a Department of Education National Rural Education policy statement which pledged the Department to assure that, "Rural Education shall receive an equitable share of the information, services, assistance, and funds available from and through the Department of Education and its programs."

The policy statement listed ten initiatives which the Department of Education would undertake, "to the extent that resources are available and applicable federal legislation permit":

1. Assist educators and administrators on all levels ... to improve the delivery of educational services to rural communities.

2. Work to expand the data base on the condition of education in rural areas... to disseminate information to educational institutions and programs serving rural communities.

3. Monitor education programs... to insure equity for all local education agencies regardless of size, location, or condition.

4. Assist in identifying and developing special programs available for handicapped individuals located in rural areas.

5. Provide personnel to coordinate the consolidation of available research on shortages and additional needs for analysis by the Secretary's rural education committee.

6. Include rural institutions in demonstration and pilot projects, and involve cross sections of rural communities in educational technology planning.

7. Provide consultative and technical assistance to rural educational entities as a means to improve the quality of education in rural areas and to facilitate communications, through initiatives such as an annual forum.

8. Assist in improving public sector/private sector collaboration by coordinating networks at local, regional, state, and federal levels.

9. Assist rural education in improving the achievement of black students, American Indians, migrant workers, and other minorities.

10. Assist individuals and families living in rural areas with family education programs and services.

We have made and are continuing to make significant progress in each of these ten areas.

* On the interagency level, working through the Federal Interagency Committee on Education, we have participated in the development of an inventory of rural education activities across all federal agencies. We initiated discussion with the Departments of Health and Human Services, and Transportation and such national organizations as Rural America and the American Council on Rural Special Education to determine the feasibility of developing interagency coordination and cooperation in improving transportation in rural communities.

* Within the Department of Education, we are able to again report an increase in the number of activities and programs/projects supporting rural education this year over the number reported last year. There is also a greater diversity in these activities. Last year, we reported 244 activities. This year, we are able to report over 300 such activities. This is due to both an actual increase in the level of activity within the Department and to better reporting.

* Linkages and continuing communications has been established with major organizations in rural education. These included the Rural Education Association, People United for Rural Education, Rural America, the Small Schools Network of AASA, the National Rural Development Institute, the Commission on Small/Rural Community Colleges of AACJC, the Rural Development Committee of AASCU, and numerous rural agencies and centers.

Bruce Barker, Assistant Professor of Education at Texas Tech University, and Ivan Muse, Professor of Education at Brigham Young University, contacted public school superintendents in over 640 rural school districts in 45 different states during 1983, in an effort to identify exceptional programs and practices in our nation's rural schools. Their report in the Fall 1985 issue of "The Rural Educator" included the following: Mott School District #6 (316 students) in North Dakota, reported cooperative use, with six other districts, of a MultiDistrict Vocational Mobile Program which has brought vocational education opportunities to students living in isolated rural settings. Liberty School District in Spangle, Washington indicated that curricular offerings for their 180 secondary students had expanded from less than 15 elective courses to over 100 through the use of supervised correspondence study courses supervised and financed by the school. CAL Community School District, a small progressive district in Iowa with only 241 students, reported that volunteer help from parents and senior citizens has enabled over 150 adults to participate in adult continuing education classes offered in the evenings at the district's one school. The district also has a gifted and

talented program for students in grades K through eight and has computers in use for instructional purposes beginning in grade one and continuing through grade twelve.

Rutland School District in South Dakota (150 students) reported the use of a modified block scheduling system which has provided secondary students more study time and permitted teachers more instructional time. Eagle Bend School District in Minnesota, a small district with only 378 students, reported that it has its own television station and described it as "probably the world's smallest television station". The FCC licensed the station to go on the air in the fall of 1980 as an experiment in low-power community broadcasting with a 30 mile radius signal on a regular TV set.

Sacketts Harbor Central School District in New York State (525 students) reported that it offered an environmental safety course for its secondary students that was adapted to interests and activities available to students in the local area.

Other programs reported from across the nation included the use of a "report card" by parents to report their perception of teacher/school performance and any problems they may see in the school or its programs; the use of computers to manage attendance records, payroll records, etc; telephone conferencing between schools and specialized subject matter experts; extensive use of volunteers to assist teachers in providing programs which otherwise would not be available; cross grade tutoring;

cooperative sharing of education specialists and programs between school districts; career education programs brought to the school by local members of the community; special reading programs and foreign student exchange programs. Barker and Muse concluded with the observation that the small/rural schools in America share many of the problems that beset education in general: inadequate finances, shortage of teachers, changing social values, and pressures from special interest groups. The fact is that many of these problems are magnified in the small school. This is particularly true of the challenge to service the many and varied educational needs of students as determined by the students, parents, the community, the state and the nation. But, to think that rural schools cannot successfully meet this challenge is a fallacy.

There are really only two basic ways that we can systematically influence the quality of education in our rural communities. We can do it by improving what is taught, or by improving how we teach it. The resolution of that dichotomy is an age old continuing discussion, but as for me I will always put my money on improving teachers and teaching, the managers of the learning environment. One can be filled with subject matter up to the ears, but if one cannot successfully develop interests, attitudes, ideals, understandings and abilities one will fail as a teacher. We define learning as the willful change in behavior of the learner. So, if the behavior of the learner has not changed as a consequence of the time spent with that individual, that student has not learned. If the student has not learned there has been no teaching, and if there has been no teaching the teacher has not taught. John Goodlad, education professor

and director of the University of Washington at Seattle's Center for Educational Renewal, recently had something to say about that all-important process of the preparation of our teachers. At the 38th annual conference of the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education last spring he recommended, among other things, a symbiotic joining of school districts, their communities, and universities to improve the quality of teacher education programs. He called for the use of local school district members as "clinical representatives" in teacher education programs to let student teachers know what is going on in the local school. Teacher training programs should design curricula that prepare teachers in both the what and the how, and theory and practice must be brought together every step of the way.

The National Center for Research in Vocational Education at Ohio State University has conducted a study of vocational and adult education systems in isolated rural areas. The study included a review of literature, legislation and exemplary programs, and interviews with community leaders in twenty isolated, rural counties. An isolated rural county was defined as a county or county-equivalent with a population under 10,000 according to the 1970 U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census report. The counties were selected in order to provide geographic representativeness and on the basis of unemployment and poverty level indicators.

Interviews with representatives of the business, civic, and education sectors, supplemented by printed documents, resulted in the identification of problems facing vocational and adult education in isolated rural areas.

Chief among these were a lack of jobs, funding, and transportation; sparse populations; difficulties with teacher recruitment and retention; inadequate counseling and guidance services; lack of grantsmanship abilities; inaccessibility of services; student characteristics; and legislative mandates. Other problems that were mentioned included energy, community attitudes, linkages, equipment and facilities, and adult education.

Several critical factors emerged that federal, state and local governments should be sensitive to if they are to be responsive to the educational needs of rural people. First, the local autonomy of the rural community must be preserved. Second, programs must allow for flexibility in the types of activities that are funded. Third, acquisition of funds and reporting the use of funds must be simplified in light of the lack of personnel resources in rural areas. Fourth, funds should be used to open up options for the individual and the school. Fifth, funding formulas should be changed; the use of population as a base is unfair to rural areas. Finally, federal and state funds should be used to stimulate innovation and creativity so that a different model of education can emerge that is more suitable to rural areas.

In addition to these critical factors, the following priority areas were identified:

1. Economic development is necessary because of the lack of jobs available in rural areas. Economic development in rural areas

involves job creation by bringing industry into a community or by developing the entrepreneurial skills of residents so that they can start their own businesses. The implication for training includes a greater flexibility in skill development, i.e. training in job cluster areas rather than providing overly narrow, job-specific training.

2. Accessibility is a key priority area that includes transportation to existing services as well as development of alternative delivery systems, e.g. the use of mobile units, telecommunications, or individualized, contracted vocational services.

3. Up-to-date training is related to being responsive to current labor market demands, including the type of training, facilities, and equipment.

4. Teacher training, recruitment, and retention is a priority area in order to provide a high quality of services.

5. Energy is a priority area in terms of conservation of energy by the school system, and in terms of inclusion of energy-related occupations in the curriculum.

6. Linkages are a priority area in terms of the provision of services for people of all ages, creation of jobs, fostering economic development, and improvement of community attitudes.

7. The provision of postsecondary and adult education is a priority area for the residual older population in need of basic education and for the high school graduates (of all ages) in need of post-secondary training.

8. Supplementary services, including counseling and guidance, career education, and special education are needed.

9. The needs of special populations, i.e. the handicapped, poor, minorities, women, and bilingual persons, are not being adequately met in rural areas.

Those are only a few selected excerpts from recent research and writings on issues and programs in rural education. I hope they will add to your thinking and discussion. I have probably unloaded considerably more than you care to consider and I am a strong believer in that old truisim that the mind can absorb only as much as the seat can endure. So, may I close with a bit of advice for those of us working in rural education, educational administration and research and development. The advice is in the form of twelve proverbs - six for planning what we do and six for doing what we have planned.

SIX PROVERBS FOR PLANNING

1. The gopher hunting the beetle is often unaware of the hawk hunting him.

2. The mouse with only one hole is easily caught.

3. In shallow water, shrimps make fools of sharks.

4. Do not try to catch two frogs with one hand.

5. Give the bird room to fly.

6. Dynamite comes in small packages.

SIX PROVERBS FOR OPERATION

1. Do not insult the crocodile until you have crossed the river.

2. It is better to struggle with a sick jackass than carry the wood yourself.

3. Do not throw stones at a scurrying mouse and break the precious vase.

4. It is not always the final blow of the ax that fells the tree.

5. The successful rural educator brings home the bacon without butchering the hog.

6. Being a small school superintendent or rural educator is like trying to put sox on an octopus.

It has been a pleasure to visit with you this morning. Have a good conference and thank you for inviting me.